TEACHING FRENCH IN FRENCH IMMERSION: AN OVERVIEW AT GRADES 6 TO 8

USER GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

TARGET AUDIENCE

Teaching French in French Immersion: an Overview at Grades 6 to 8 is designed for in-service workshops or pre-service training for French immersion teachers at grades 6 to 8. Available in English and French versions, it may also be of interest to other second language teachers, as well as administrators and researchers.

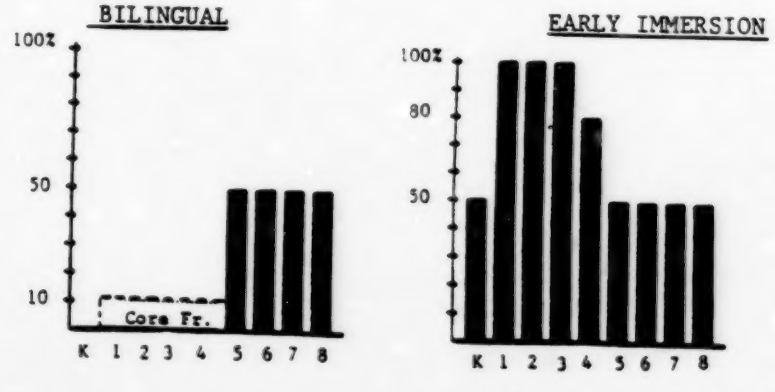
OBJECTIVES

- To provide unrehearsed, real-life examples from four French immersion classrooms.
- To stimulate lively discussion about the pros and cons of various teaching theories and practices.
- To encourage teachers to reflect on their own approaches.

In this brief overview of language teaching in French immersion, we can only touch on some of the complex issues which confront the immersion teacher daily. We hope it will not only provide our viewers with a basis for thought and discussion, but that it will also help them in their own classroom situations.

COMPONENTS

- A 3-part video presentation (VHS format; 1 hr. 14 min.) based on taped excerpts from four French immersion classrooms: one grade 6 bilingual, one grade 8 bilingual, and two grade 8 early immersion.



PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL DAY IN FRENCH

The videotape should be stopped at the end of each section for follow-up activities and discussion, as described in this Guide. At least three hours should be allowed for each part, ideally on three separate days.

Section 1, Creating A French Environment (27 mins.)

Section 2, Creating A Sense of Security (16 mins.)

Section 3, Creating Opportunities To Communicate (31 mins.)

- A User Guide, designed specifically for workshop leaders, but also of use to individual viewers. The Guide includes worksheet masters, background information, questions to serve as discussion prompters, and a transcript of the videotape narration which accompanies the classroom excerpts.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE VIDEO PRESENTATION

During the course of its development, **Teaching French in French Immersion: an Overview at Grades 6 to 8** has been viewed by nearly 300 teachers, administrators and researchers from across Canada in the field of second language and French immersion education. Their comments and suggestions have been taken into account and implemented wherever possible. In assessing this feedback we have identified three major questions which are likely to be raised again:

1) **Why does the video appear to be so teacher-centered?**

Several factors must be taken into account here. First, the development of the video was based on data from an earlier classroom observation project (1987-88), where the primary objective was simply to observe and videotape four French immersion teachers, over a one-week period, as they went about their normal day-to-day routine. As a result, the focus of the camera was generally on the teacher rather than the students and the activities filmed reflect the teachers' lesson plans for a particular 5-day

period. Where less teacher-centered activities took place at other times, either as preparation for or follow-up to video examples, they are noted in the Guide. Excerpts from some of the more student-centered lessons which did occur during the taping can be found in Section 3. Some presenters may prefer to show this section first. Although there is a certain continuity among the three parts of the video, it is also designed so that they can be viewed in any order, or in isolation if desired.

Secondly, the objective of the video was to present examples from real life (not scripted or rehearsed in any way) that would be of potential benefit to other immersion teachers. The funding for this project was for a prototype unit which would provide an overview of some of the essential characteristics of effective immersion classrooms. These characteristics, reflected in the video subtitles, are based on an extensive review of the literature (see **References**) as well as the four classrooms shown in the presentation. The selection of the four teachers was partly based on a 4-skills French language evaluation conducted in most of the grade 8 bilingual and early immersion classrooms across four Metropolitan Toronto school boards (1986-87). Subsequent inquiry about such aspects as student success in later grades also suggested a link between these teachers and the above average levels of French achievement by their students in all the comprehension and production tasks included in the evaluation.

We also wanted to feature classrooms which emphasized the development of communicative competence. On the basis of student responses to a questionnaire which accompanied the evaluation, however, it appeared that while the classrooms did include some communicative activities, the 26 grade 8 classes tested could not generally be considered student-centred: "Comprehensible output is, unfortunately, generally missing in typical classroom settings, language classrooms and immersion classrooms being no

exception" (Swain 1985). This is not to say that comprehensible "input" is not an equally important factor in the immersion classroom or that the more teacher-centered excerpts shown in the video cannot be of value to other teachers. As each of the four teachers would readily acknowledge, the gap between the ideal and the real is a difficult one to bridge, particularly on a sustained basis. Where viewers feel such gaps exist in the examples they see, they should be encouraged to think about the underlying principles and the strategies they themselves have used, and to discuss the difficulties inherent in the wedding of theory and practice. Relevant suggestions and questions are supplied throughout the Guide to help participants in this process.

2) **Why does Section 2 of the video deal with some strategies that are non-specific to immersion?**

Certain techniques are such an integral part of any effective classroom that it may be useful, especially for pre-service, to consider them in the immersion context. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that the use of such strategies as providing clear explanations, building on the known and establishing familiar routines are of particular value in classrooms where learning is taking place in a second language (e.g. Tardif and Weber 1987, Wong Fillmore 1985).

3) **Why do some of the teachers on the video have English accents? Why aren't they French Canadian?**

As in the regular English program, in immersion one finds a variety of accents and backgrounds. Although a high level of French language competence is an obvious prerequisite, not all immersion teachers are, or need be, native speakers. While the four teachers were selected without regard to language background, they reflect the range of backgrounds among Canadian immersion teachers: Marie-Françoise comes from France,

Paul's mother is French Canadian, Leonard was born in Italy, and Roy studied in both Quebec and France.

USING THE VIDEO

A worksheet list of subtitles and other essential print visuals in the video is provided for each of the three sections (see **Appendix**). Before each section is played, copies of the corresponding list should be distributed to all participants to guide them in their viewing of the presentation and to give them the opportunity to jot down questions or comments in the spaces provided under each heading. In an unrehearsed classroom situation, it is impossible to place microphones exactly where they will be needed. Consequently, students are sometimes difficult to hear and viewers should be prepared to stop the tape at any time to replay a student response or discuss some point of particular interest.

Before they watch the video, it is essential that viewers understand that the excerpts they will see have been chosen to exemplify particular characteristics (reflected in the corresponding subtitles) and that these examples have been taken from a larger context. Although bits of contextual background information have been included in the following pages, it is obviously not possible to provide the "larger picture" (what happened before, or what happened later, over a day, a week, a month) for each excerpt.

SECTION 1 - CREATING A FRENCH ENVIRONMENT

Teacher's French Language Skills, French at All Times, Natural Speech, and **Strategies to Help Students Understand**

Background information can be provided, either before or after viewing, wherever it seems useful. It may also be helpful to ask pre-viewing questions to prepare participants for Section 1 in general (e.g. "What do you do to create a French environment in your classroom?") as well as for later questions and activities relating to specific themes --for example, "Think about some of the strategies you use to help students understand" (see page 8 for post-viewing questions).

The end of "Strategies to Help Students Understand" may be a good spot to stop the tape for questions and discussion as the focus moves from teacher to student language in the remainder of Section 1.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

French at All Times

- The four teachers also extend their use of French outside the classroom. At the end of Section 1, where the students "sum it up", there is reference to a lunch-time activity in Leonard's class. Leonard spends 15 minutes daily with students who are free to join him for a French language lunch. This creates an informal communicative opportunity where even those who may be shy in class speak up on topics of personal interest.

Strategies to Help Students Understand

- The brief vocabulary examples ("Explaining", "One-word translations", "Vocabulary checks", etc.) were selected to illustrate particular strategies used by the teachers to help their students understand new items as they arise in various subjects (Language Arts, History, etc.). It is important to note that these words are not emphasized and then forgotten. For example, in the other sections of the video one can find a number of excerpts which demonstrate how Leonard returns again and again to recently taught items (see "fou/folle", **Creating A Sense of Security**) and provides opportunities for students to use this vocabulary in a meaningful context (**Creating Opportunities To Communicate**).

- The majority of the examples are from French Language Arts lessons. In most cases, all four teachers make even fewer accommodations for second language comprehension difficulties in other subject areas. When needed, however, they use similar strategies to make content comprehensible, as illustrated by the "Explaining" ("un châtaignier") excerpt which is taken from a grade 6 Social Studies lesson, the "Root words" ("urbain") excerpt from a grade 8 Geography lesson, and the "Vocabulary checks" ("faire faillite"), "Gestures" ("Voter une loi") and "Visual aids" excerpts from grade 8 History lessons. For the latter History lesson, Paul had prepared his own audiotape to accompany the National Film Board filmstrip which his students watch in small groups at the listening centre. Each group of students then discusses what has been seen and heard and prepares answers to the content comprehension questions.

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Teacher's French Language Skills

- How do you maintain your French? Other suggestions?

French at All Times

- Leonard spends 15 minutes daily with students who are free to join him for a French language lunch. What other ways could be found to extend the use of French with one's students outside the classroom?

Natural Speech

- The workshop participants can be divided into smaller groups. Three minutes are allowed for each member to write a couple of sentences describing what he/she understands by "natural" speech, then five minutes for each group to come up with a collective definition. The presentation of these definitions can be used to stimulate and clarify general discussion about the advantages and perceived disadvantages of using "natural" as opposed to "modified" speech (e.g. the pros and cons of teacher repetition).

Strategies to Help Students Understand

- Look at the list of strategies to help students understand (Worksheet No. 1). Have you used any of these strategies with your students? Do you have other strategies that you have found effective? Identify some of the advantages and disadvantages of each (e.g. cognates and false cognates).

En français s'il vous plaît!, Finding the Right Words, Something To Fall Back On, French and the Outside World, and **The Students Sum It Up**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

French and the Outside World

- "Trips to French-speaking places": Roy had taken a group of students, including some in this year's grade 8 class, to Quebec City the previous year.

- "Classroom visitors": The teacher had asked the monitrice, Thémine, to lead weekly discussion groups with his students. This gave them an opportunity to interact in an informal setting as well as to hear a different French language model.

- "School projects in French": When Marie-Françoise's grade 6 students participated in the annual school Science Fair, they made all their presentations in French. These presentations involved written work (attractively decorated booklets and poster board displays) as well as oral production.

- "French language books": Like "Daily journals", Roy's reading aloud to his class reflects a daily activity. The teacher selects a novel he thinks will be of interest to his students, who look forward to the invitation to gather around his desk and listen to the day's chapter. At the end of each session, the teacher asks questions to make sure the students have understood and gives them the opportunity to voice their opinions about the story.

- "French language media": The unit on advertising, developed by Roy, was used over a period of four weeks. First, the teacher introduced the unit, posing a

series of questions about the purpose or function of advertising and asking the students to name their favorite ads; at the same time, he guided the students in an analysis of the underlying objectives of advertising and the kind of information it transmits. He then had the students guess which food products had the highest budget for advertising back in 1976 (coffee, soft drinks and chewing gum headed the list); a discussion followed regarding the nutritional value of these products. During the third step (not seen in any of the video excerpts), the students were asked to analyse advertisements for jewelry, computers, etc., used in French Canadian magazines. The teacher had prepared transparencies based on such advertisements and used an overhead projector to show them on a screen as the students discussed their symbolism, stereotypes, word plays and effectiveness. Next, the students were asked to work individually, or in pairs, to create their own print ads. They were encouraged to strive for originality as well as accuracy. Finally, the students produced their own original TV commercials which were then videotaped.

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

En français s'il vous plaît!

- What methods have you found to prevent the use of English in your classroom?

Finding the Right Words

- Can you suggest some creative uses of French (e.g. games, poetry, metaphor) to motivate students to "find the right words"?

Something to Fall Back On

- Identify a grammar point that is giving your class some trouble and consider how you could review and practise it in the context of a discussion on a topic of personal interest to the students (e.g. TV programs, books, sports, after class activities). Is there a particularly successful activity you can tell the group about as an example of when this really worked?

French and the Outside World

- Discuss the practicality and effectiveness of ways suggested in the video to create a French environment outside the classroom and to draw on francophone resources and culture. What other ways are available in your school or neighbourhood? How might these be integrated into various subject areas?

- "Daily journals": This is a useful activity, and one that can be extended beyond the classroom, to get students to practise their French writing skills in a personalized, communicative way. Can you suggest other creative ways to encourage this type of communicative written expression in French (e.g. letters, memos)?

FOLLOW-UP FOR SECTION 1

- Ask participants to rank the various themes (reflected in the video subtitles on their worksheets) according to how important they think they are for creating a French environment in the classroom, then to explain/discuss their reasons.

- Ask participants to select and try out certain techniques or ideas (either observed in the video or generated through workshop discussion) in their own classrooms, then to think about these, and if practical, discuss them in a subsequent session.

- Ask participants to do their own critiques of Section 1 (in groups for discussion during the workshop, or individually to be presented in a subsequent session).

SECTION 2 - CREATING A SENSE OF SECURITY

Planning and Preparation, Clear Explanations, Building on the Known, Routines in the Structure of Lessons and Activities, A Variety of Styles, Homework and Tests, and **C'est bien!**

Background information can be provided, either before or after viewing, wherever it seems useful. It may also be helpful to ask pre-viewing questions to prepare participants for Section 2 in general (e.g. "What do you do to create a sense of security, to make sure that your students always know exactly what is expected of them, in your classroom?") as well as for later questions and activities relating to specific themes --for example, "Take a few minutes to examine the Variety of Techniques listed on Worksheet No. 3 before watching the video example of a routine lesson structure" (see page 15 for post-viewing activity).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Introduction

- If Section 2 of the video is shown before or instead of Section 1, the introductory portion (up to "**Creating A French Environment,** Teacher's French Language Skills") should be played first to provide viewers with necessary background information regarding the four teachers and their classrooms, the grade level and type of French immersion program that will be seen, etc.

Clear Explanations

- Note that in an immersion class, the common pattern for giving instructions reflected in the excerpts from Marie-Françoise's class takes on a dual purpose during Step 4 ("Reformulation by students"), where the teacher must determine

whether comprehension difficulties relate to language or to content before providing further explanations.

Routines in the Structure of Lessons and Activities

- Since he finds the vocabulary in de Maupassant's "La Peur" fairly challenging for his students, Leonard covers the story more slowly and in more depth than usual. Thus, although the goal for the lesson excerpted in the video is to take up homework questions for content comprehension, grammar, spelling and style, "with emphasis on vocabulary", the goal of a subsequent lesson will be "to take up the story structure and how the author builds suspense".

- Leonard had already commented on the student's blackboard work prior to the excerpt where we see him erasing it and asking for an alternative answer (because the student has not adapted his answer to the question). It is the teacher's hope that his system of correcting written exercises on the blackboard will encourage his students to self correct while writing.

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Planning and Preparation, Clear Explanations, Building on the Known, Routines in the Structure of Lessons and Activities

- Strategies such as careful planning, clear explanations, building on the known, and consistent familiar routines are used in all effective classrooms. How might they be of particular value in a second language learning situation? (Building student confidence, encouraging French language production, enabling students to focus all their attention on instruction in the second language without feeling confused or wasting time, etc.).

- Discuss the advantages/disadvantages of various techniques (verbal/non-verbal cues to save time, teacher/student reading aloud, etc. -- see list, Worksheet No. 3).

- Suggest a possible theme or unit of study. Then choose:
  a) a current issue to introduce it,
  b) a relevant article or book to read and discuss in class,
  c) a new topic for study or discussion that this unit will in turn introduce.

Homework and Tests

- Discuss the role of parents in reinforcing classroom and homework rules. What methods can you suggest for encouraging such involvement?

- Imagine that you are one of your students. Summarize from his/her point of view your expectations for:
  a) regular homework,
  b) homework correction in class,
  c) recording new vocabulary items,
  d) test correction.

C'est bien!

- The importance of praise as a confidence builder is only touched on briefly at the end of Section 2. Have you noticed any other ways by which these teachers provide positive reinforcement? Praise should not be seen as being meaningless or condescending. What methods have you found most effective?

FOLLOW-UP FOR SECTION 2

- Ask participants to rank the various themes (reflected in the video subtitles on their worksheets) according to how important they think they are for creating a sense of security in the classroom, then to explain/discuss their reasons.

- Ask participants to select and try out certain techniques or ideas (either observed in the video or generated through workshop discussion) in their own classrooms, then to think about these, and if practical, discuss them during a subsequent session.

- Ask participants to do their own critiques of Section 2 (in groups for discussion during the workshop, or individually to be presented in a subsequent session).

SECTION 3 - CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMUNICATE

Student Talk, Individualized Teaching, Pair Work, Group Work, Integration of Content & Language, and **Unplanned Discussions**

Background information can be provided, either before or after viewing, wherever it seems useful. It may also be helpful to ask pre-viewing questions to prepare participants for Section 3 in general (e.g. "What do you do to create opportunities to communicate in your classroom?") as well as for later questions and activities relating to specific themes -- for example, "Think about some of the strategies you use to get students to speak up/use sustained speech/initiate questions or topics" (see pages 20-22 for post-viewing activities).

The end of "Unplanned Discussions" may be a good spot to stop the tape for questions and discussion as the focus moves from the issue of how to encourage student talk to that of error correction in the last segment of Section 3.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Introduction

- If Section 3 of the video is shown before or instead of Section 1, the introductory portion (up to "**Creating A French Environment,** Teacher's French Language Skills") should be played first to provide viewers with necessary background information regarding the four teachers and their classrooms, the grade level and type of French immersion program that will be seen, etc.

Individualized Teaching

- Teacher: "Comment préfères-tu travailler? Seule, avec toute la classe, ou en petits groupes?"

  Student: "Je préfère l'entrevue parce que tu me donnes toute ton attention".

Paul feels it is important to use a variety of techniques, depending on the needs of the subject or class. Although he does extensive individualized teaching, especially for Math and Writing, he also uses whole class teaching and makes varied use of groups -- e.g. asking one group to go to the listening centre, or having different groups do projects involving various aspects of a topic (see Section 1, "Visual aids" History lesson excerpts). The example of individualized teaching shown here is taken from a Math class where students working on enrichment questions come up for a 2 to 3-minute individual interview while the rest of the class works on regular Math assignments. (Note that anybody who has satisfactorily completed his or her regular work can try these enrichment exercises; usually about one third of the class does so.) In Section 1 ("Something To Fall Back On"), we see an individualized teaching example from a Writing lesson where the students write in pencil, bringing their drafts back until they are up to standard. These interviews are somewhat longer (5 or 6 minutes), but the same goal exists of creating an uninterrupted sense of privacy. The teacher makes note of particular problem areas for both Math and Writing. Based on this information, he designs special exercises from which he can draw if he feels an individual student needs extra practice in a specific area.

Pair Work

- Teacher: "Comment préfères-tu travailler? Seul, avec toute la classe, ou en petits groupes?"

Student: "Je préfère travailler en groupe parce qu'on peut apprendre à travailler avec les autres".

The preparation and presentation of student dialogues on subjects of topical interest is a regular activity in Marie-Françoise's classroom. In the video excerpts seen here, two boys work together to prepare and then present an interview between a hockey player and a journalist, based on the theme of the Winter Olympics which have just taken place in Calgary.

Group Work

- Teacher: "Comment préfères-tu travailler? Seule, avec toute la classe, ou en petits groupes?"

  Student: "Je préfère travailler en groupe parce que je peux parler avec mes amies".

Once they have been given full instructions about the Science experiment they are about to conduct ("Montrer comment obtenir des solutions non saturées, saturées et sursaturées"), Leonard's students break into 9 prearranged groups -- each reflecting a range of abilities -- of 2 or 3 students, group sizes being based on the available number of burners. Each group designates one member as a "secretary" to record its observations. As a follow-up to the experiment, the students will enter these observations in their own Science notes and write up their "conclusions". Individual presentations of these conclusions will be made, then discussed and corrected, the following day.

Integration of Content & Language

- Leonard makes planned, teacher-led discussions which encourage the integration of content and language a daily 5 to 30-minute introductory activity. In the first series of video excerpts seen here, he has selected a subject of topical interest,

the greenhouse effect, which had been featured in an English-language television program earlier in the week. The teacher leads into the discussion by asking an everyday question about the weather. As the lesson moves along, he writes notes about the greenhouse effect on the blackboard. He then asks the students to help him complete some of these notes, posing a number of questions involving the use of the passive and the pronominal form which he is currently teaching in Grammar. At the end of the discussion, he reviews one of the new vocabulary items, the French word for 'styrofoam' which he himself had just learned; having looked it up in several dictionaries without success, he had heard it that same morning on the French radio station he listens to daily to help him maintain his own French (see Section 1, "Teacher's French Language Skills" example). As a follow-up activity, the students copy the blackboard notes into their Science books and read these over as preparation for the next day, where the introductory activity will take the form of a review and an expansion of the previous day's discussion.

Unplanned Discussions

- Another example of opportunities for unplanned discussions, where students can speak freely on topics of their choice, can be found in the background notes for Section 1, "French at All Times": "Leonard spends 15 minutes daily with students who are free to join him for a French language lunch".

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Student Talk

- Discuss how to get all students to speak in a whole class teaching situation. An important technique, not mentioned in the narration but evident in the "Student Talk" video excerpts, is the use of 'wait time', or the amount of time a teacher

gives the student to answer a question: "It has been shown that by extending wait time, students are more likely to provide an adequate answer. When the response is in the students' second language, it would seem even more essential to extend wait time in order to allow students to fully formulate their answers" (Lapkin and Swain 1989).

- One of the examples in this section shows Leonard digressing to give his students some information about Van Gogh's troubled life as a parallel to de Maupassant's. (The class is studying the de Maupassant story, "La Peur", in French Language Arts.) The students show considerable interest and after the teacher has answered all their questions, he tells them he will bring in slides of Van Gogh's paintings to show them. Can you suggest some follow-up activities to encourage more sustained speech/student initiated speech (e.g. group research, presentations)?

Individualized Teaching, Pair Work, Group Work

- At the end of the example of a routine lesson structure involving a whole class teaching situation in Section 2, reference is made to the fact that similar frameworks can be established for other types of classroom organization requiring a less formal context, such as group work, pair work and individualized teaching. Why are such frameworks needed? What kinds of preparation are required for the examples you have seen? Imagine that you are one of your students. What activities would he/she say you do regularly in pairs? in groups? in an individualized teaching situation? What difficulties/successes have you experienced in trying such approaches? What kinds of themes and activities lend themselves best to each?

- The pair work excerpt demonstrates one type of role-playing situation which can be very useful at this grade 6 level. By grade 8, students often become more self-conscious and less willing to participate in such presentations. What activities have you discovered (in French Language Arts/in other subject areas) to encourage more reserved groups of students to use the second language creatively in a dramatic context?

- Having taken into consideration the background information in each case (pages 18-19), how might one make the individualized teaching/the pair work/the group work lessons excerpted in the video more communicative? more student-centered? What difficulties have you encountered in translating theory into practice?

Integration of Content & Language

- What were the teacher's goals in the informal Science lesson ("Integration of Content & Language")? What strategies did he use to achieve those goals?

- What other ways have you found to get your students to talk about current events?

Unplanned Discussions

- Discuss the importance of seizing opportunities for unplanned discussions. How might you build these into your regular schedule?

- How do you reconcile the demands of a heavy curriculum (especially at the grade 8 level) with the need for unstructured, spontaneous discussion time?

Communication and Error Correction

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Creative story telling and writing, based on a picture, is a regular activity in Marie-Françoise's classroom. The students must make up a story as homework for oral presentation to the class (the teacher starts by asking for volunteers and then calls on specific students). In the lesson from which the video examples are taken, some students have already written down their story in draft form and read aloud from these notes. The teacher interrupts only when the meaning is not clear, or when a vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation error interferes with comprehensibility. Otherwise, she waits until the end of the story to give praise and to correct the most obvious errors, eliciting the help of the other students and writing on the blackboard whatever rule or example is required to explain each correction. The grammatical focus of this particular story is to practise the use of the 'passé composé', especially conjugated with 'être'. For the second stage of this activity, the students will write their story as a composition, to be corrected first by another student and then by the teacher.

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- What might be the advantages/disadvantages of the types of error correction seen on the video?

- What techniques have you found useful for:

  (a) correcting oral production (in French Language Arts, in other subject areas)?

  (b) correcting written production (in French Language Arts, in other subject areas)?

  (c) getting students to solve their own problems or self-correct?

FOLLOW-UP FOR SECTION 3

- Ask participants to rank the various themes (reflected in the video subtitles on their worksheets) according to how important they think they are for creating opportunities to communicate in the classroom, then to explain/discuss their reasons.

- Ask participants to select and try out certain techniques or ideas (either observed in the video or generated through workshop discussion) in their own classrooms, then to think about these, and if practical, discuss them during a subsequent session.

- Ask participants to do their own critiques of Section 3 (in groups for discussion during the workshop, or individually to be presented in a subsequent session).

TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEOTAPE NARRATION

TEACHING FRENCH IN FRENCH IMMERSION: AN OVERVIEW AT GRADES 6 TO 8

The presentation you are about to see is divided into three parts:

"Creating A French Environment",

"Creating A Sense of Security", and

"Creating Opportunities To Communicate".

During each part of the video you will see scenes from four French immersion classrooms: one grade 6 bilingual, one grade 8 bilingual, and two grade 8 early immersion. These are classrooms in which effective teaching and learning has taken place. Although the teaching styles of the four teachers vary widely, many of the strategies they use can be linked to common characteristics of effective immersion teaching.

These characteristics, reflected in numerous research studies in second language education, will be highlighted in the presentation.

Time -- never enough of it! There is paperwork, there are interruptions, absences, other school projects -- and then, before you know it, there's the bell!

All teachers suffer from this eternal lack of time, but perhaps none more than immersion teachers. In immersion it's hoped that students will learn French much as they learn their first language, in a natural way. But for the young child, every waking hour can be a language learning experience; for the immersion student, only a few hours a day, in a limited environment, must suffice. And so, the need to make every minute count underlies most essential elements of effective immersion classrooms.

SECTION 1 - CREATING A FRENCH ENVIRONMENT

Teacher's French Language Skills

In spite of their varied backgrounds, each of our four teachers is fluently bilingual. This high level of French language competence is probably the most obvious characteristic of the effective immersion classroom.

Less obvious perhaps, is the need for immersion teachers to maintain their French, a need often felt even by native speakers living in an English-speaking environment:
Marie-Françoise speaks French at home with her family and returns to France for an annual visit.
Paul has a large collection of French books; a long recuperation from a broken leg gave him the opportunity to read his entire collection of mystery stories in French.
Roy also does a lot of French-language reading and pursues advanced studies in French.
Leonard tries to maintain his skills by reading and by listening to French radio every morning before school.

French at All Times

In order to create a French environment in the classroom, it is clearly necessary for the teacher to speak French at all times, not only during formal lessons, but also before school, between lessons, and at the end of the day.

Natural Speech

It's important for students to hear the kind of French they may encounter in real-life situations. Our teachers all speak naturally and their students rise to the challenge. When a teacher does rephrase a word or expression, it's usually for enrichment as much as for comprehension.

Strategies to Help Students Understand

However, there are times when accommodations must be made for second language comprehension difficulties. Watch how skillfully these teachers use familiar strategies to make content understandable in subjects ranging from French Language Arts to History and Geography.

The only exception made by any of our teachers to the use of French in the classroom involves the teaching of vocabulary, where the occasional use of one-word English translations may be helpful for defining abstract or difficult expressions, or for pointing out derivational connections between the two languages.

All four teachers speak and write simultaneously from time to time. Leonard sees this as a particularly useful strategy, as the one reinforces the other. His students are so accustomed to this two-skills approach that they automatically reach for their vocabulary notebooks to record new words which come up in oral work.

En français s'il vous plaît!

Students in immersion classes at this level should also be speaking French at all times. As we see in these effective classrooms, this is not an impossible goal.

In a whole class teaching situation, it is relatively easy to monitor and insist on students' use of French.

In less formal situations, this becomes much more difficult. For the first two weeks of each school year, Leonard allows his students to fall back on English from time to time; after that, only French is accepted.

If a student doesn't know how to say something in French, for example a routine question such as the one we've just heard, the teacher provides the correct model, then has the student write it down, often on the blackboard, so the rest of the class can learn it too. Or, if the student doesn't know a particular word, he or she may be sent to the dictionary to find it.

In younger grades, some kind of game may be helpful. Marie-Françoise reinforces the use of French by means of a dollars game. Every week she gives each student 3 fake, numbered dollars. If one student hears another use English inside the classroom, he or she can demand one "dollar" from that student, thereby increasing his or her chances of winning a regular lottery draw.

So successful have our teachers been in insisting on the use of French in the classroom, that their students generally continue to speak French to each other after the lesson, or if the teacher leaves the room.

Finding the Right Words

However, it's not enough that students "speak" in French; they must also be comprehensible. Teachers who fill in all the gaps fail to prepare their students for real-life interactions with francophones.

When students don't express themselves in a way a unilingual francophone might understand, Marie-Françoise makes no attempt to second guess or rescue them. Then the students are forced to find better ways to communicate.

Something To Fall Back On

Despite the predictably negative response to this question ("Levez la main tous ceux qui ont absolument aimé la grammaire"), Leonard's students have used their knowledge of the rules of grammar, and particularly vocabulary, to achieve a high level of production in both oral and written French. Like Marie-Françoise, Paul and Roy, Leonard teaches grammar not as an end in itself, but to help students express themselves in the language. With a rule-oriented background, they have something to fall back on if they forget or make a mistake. Paul's students write in pencil, bringing their drafts back until they're up to standard. Using a series of questions, the teacher leads his students to find their own answers through logical reasoning.

French and the Outside World

The creation of a French environment can be aided and enriched by extending it as much as possible beyond the classroom, or by drawing on francophone resources and culture.

The Students Sum It Up

("Qu'est-ce qui t'aide le plus à apprendre le français?")

SECTION 2 - CREATING A SENSE OF SECURITY

Each of our four teachers has high expectations for his or her students. In order to meet these expectations, the immersion teacher must not only provide a French environment, but also a consistent, clearly defined framework in which effective second language teaching can take place.

Planning and Preparation

Each teacher does careful planning and preparation. Long-range objectives are

developed, specific goals are established for each lesson, and a wide variety of resources is used to fill the many gaps that still exist in the supply of suitable immersion materials.

Clear Explanations

Each of our four teachers provides clear explanations for new, recent or possibly forgotten activities, so students will know exactly what's expected. The two examples you've just seen are from grade 8 classrooms. The next example is from grade 6; it illustrates a fairly typical pattern for giving instructions.

Building on the Known

As we saw in the lesson on publicity in part I of the video, drawing on familiar topics or prior knowledge can be a useful means of developing student confidence, both aiding comprehension and encouraging second language production.

In another French Language Arts lesson, Roy makes a comparison between James Bond films and the detective novel he is using as a text.

And in History, Leonard asks his students to imagine the consequences if an event similar to the closing of Boston Harbour were to take place in Toronto.

Routines in the Structure of Lessons and Activities

The use of routines to provide a sense of security for students faced with the challenge of learning in an unfamiliar language is a common characteristic of immersion teaching in the early grades. This can still be observed, although generally in more sophisticated form, in effective classrooms at higher levels. Familiar routines can be built not only into discipline and general classroom management, but also into the structure of lessons and activities. It's clear, for example, that at each stage of the following Literature lesson, Leonard's students know exactly what is expected of them. At the same time, it's

important to note that the teacher uses a wide variety of techniques to maintain student interest and respond to individual circumstances.

Whenever there are homework questions to correct, the first part of this lesson routinely involves students writing the questions and answers on the blackboard while the teacher and the other students read and discuss portions of the text.

During the second part of the lesson, the teacher takes up the questions and answers on the blackboard, while the students correct their own work at their seats.
From time to time, the teacher asks the students about their answers or poses more thought-provoking questions.
And as each answer is corrected on the blackboard, marks are assigned for content and for grammar.

We've seen how our teachers build on the known to develop confidence and spark discussion. It is equally important to return to newly taught material as often as possible. During the second activity, Leonard introduces the masculine and feminine forms of the adjective "fou/folle" to explain "égaré".
Toward the end of the lesson, he returns to the topic.
And two days later, he returns to it again, this time building on as well as reviewing recently acquired knowledge.

A Variety of Styles

The example of a routine lesson structure we've just looked at involves a whole class teaching situation. Similar frameworks can also be established, however, where teaching

objectives or student needs suggest a less structured context. Examples of group work, pair work and individualized teaching will be shown in part 3.

Homework and Tests

Each of the four teachers assigns regular homework, thus freeing up precious classroom time for explanations and much needed student talk. And each makes use of parent involvement to reinforce homework as well as classroom behaviour rules. In addition to an informal, day-to-day evaluation process, tests are also given at regular intervals so the teacher can provide documented feedback to both students and parents.

C'est bien!

If clear expectations, familiar associations and regular routines help create a sense of security, recognising achievement is perhaps the greatest confidence builder of all --and all of our teachers are generous with their praise.

SECTION 3 - CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMUNICATE

Student Talk

Second language students need numerous opportunities to speak. They should be encouraged to participate as much as possible, even during routine classroom activities. Some students are always anxious to respond; others are not. Our teachers try to reach them all, taking individual comfort levels and abilities into account. Their questions range from simple ones, requiring short, predictable answers, to more open-ended, thought-provoking questions which encourage students to use complex sentences and a variety of tenses to express their opinions.

More sustained speech can be encouraged by having students clarify, elaborate or justify their statements.

In the following example, the students become so interested in what the teacher is saying that they initiate requests for further information about Van Gogh.

Second language students also need opportunities for sustained speech in more relaxed, communicative situations than those allowed by a formal, whole-class teaching context. Other options might include any of the following:

Individualized Teaching

Paul makes extensive use of individualized teaching, especially for Math and Writing. The interaction you've just seen took place during a lesson where students working on enrichment questions came up for 2 to 3-minute individual interviews. To preserve a sense of privacy, the teacher tries to keep his voice down and the rest of the students, working on regular Math assignments, know they shouldn't interrupt. Small problems can be brought to the teacher in the intervals between interviews; larger difficulties are addressed during a 5-minute break, where the teacher works with a small group of students.

Pair Work

Marie-Françoise gives her students frequent opportunities to interact and help each other. Here students work in pairs to prepare interviews, based on a subject of topical interest, which they will present to the class.

Group Work

Leonard doesn't expect his students to take his "whispering" suggestion literally. He uses this device to create an atmosphere of calm before they break into groups to work on the

science experiment he is now reviewing. During the experiment, he walks around the classroom giving assistance where needed.

Integration of Content & Language

Leonard uses this everyday question ("Quel temps fait-il?") to lead his students into a seemingly spontaneous discussion about the unusually warm weather, possible reasons for this phenomenon, and finally, the greenhouse effect.

The ensuing discussion provides an opportunity for student talk about a subject of current interest. At the same time, it allows the teacher to integrate elements of vocabulary teaching, grammar and science.

Leonard makes planned "spontaneous" discussions a regular 5 to 30-minute introductory activity. This also gives students the chance to use tenses which they are taught but often don't get the opportunity to use; here, they talk about a topic of general interest which encourages use of the conditional.

Unplanned Discussions

Finally, all our teachers find time to exchange a few words with their students in informal situations. Marie-Françoise talks with her students on the way to gym class. And in addition to his lunch-time discussions, Leonard sometimes relaxes with his students for a few minutes at the end of the day, when they can speak freely on topics of their choice.

Communication and Error Correction

Research and experience tell us that some error correction is essential in an immersion situation; but so far they have failed to provide a clearcut picture of what form it should

take. Our four teachers demonstrate a wide range of approaches when it comes to the question of when and how to react to students' second language errors:

Roy does much less correction of oral work than he does of written work. He's concerned his students won't speak up as much if he interrupts them. He tries to compensate for this by designing practice exercises for commonly made errors.

Again, Paul does error correction for written work, but little for oral. However, he does encourage an independent problem-solving approach which may help foster self-correction.

As well as doing written error correction, Marie-Françoise picks up on virtually all oral mistakes. She often does this automatically, without making students correct or repeat. But sometimes she corrects deliberately, getting them to respond and focus on commonly made errors, as she does in this oral composition activity where the students prepare and present stories based on a picture.

As we've already seen, Leonard does a great deal of error correction for oral as well as written work. Although he sometimes overlooks minor errors to save time, he generally tries to correct mistakes as they occur - so they won't become "fixed" - and most significantly, he does so without discouraging students from oral participation.

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APPENDIX

Worksheet lists of subtitles and other print visuals

(To make copies of these lists, fold the Guide and photocopy the appropriate pages.)

Worksheet No. 1

Teaching French in French Immersion: an Overview at Grades 6 to 8

Introduction:

- Marie-Françoise, Grade 6 Bilingual (Grade 5 start)
- Leonard, Grade 8 Bilingual (Grade 5 start)
- Paul, Grade 8 Early immersion (Kindergarten start)
- Roy, Grade 8 Early immersion (Kindergarten start)

Section 1 - Creating A French Environment

- Teacher's French Language Skills
- French at All Times
- Natural Speech
- Strategies to Help Students Understand
  - Explaining
  - One-word translations
  - Vocabulary checks:
    - Paraphrasing
    - Synonyms
    - Antonyms
    - Gestures
    - Root words
    - Word families
  - Visual aids: Filmstrip & audiotape
  - Speaking and writing

Worksheet No. 2

- En français s'il vous plaît!
- Finding the Right Words
- Something To Fall Back On
- French and the Outside World
  - Trips to French-speaking places
  - Classroom visitors (e.g. Thémine, a monitrice from Zaïre)
  - School projects in French (e.g. Science Fair)
  - French-language books...for reading at home or at school...and for reading aloud in class
  - Daily journals...for writing at home or at school
  - French-language media
- The Students Sum It Up

  ("Qu'est-ce qui t'aide le plus à apprendre le français?")

Worksheet No. 3

Section 2 - Creating A Sense of Security

- Planning and Preparation
- Clear Explanations
- Building on the Known
- Routines in the Structure of Lessons and Activities

A VARIETY OF TECHNIQUES

- **verbal/non-verbal cues**
- **reading aloud**
- **writing on blackboard**
- **vocabulary definitions**
- **grammar rules**
- **modeling**
- **short/long questions & answers**
- **repeating/enriching answers**
- **correcting oral work**
- **correcting written work**
- **humour/enthusiasm**

- A Variety of Styles
- Homework and Tests
- C'est bien!

Worksheet No. 4

Section 3 - Creating Opportunities To Communicate

- Student Talk
- Individualized Teaching
- Pair Work
- Group Work
- Integration of Content & Language
- Unplanned Discussions
- Communication and Error Correction